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**Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead**

Sheila Ward  
Lead Statistician  
Forest Research  
(by email)

25 March 2020

Dear Sheila

**TIMBER PRICE INDICES**

As you are aware, we recently completed a compliance check of Forest Research's [Timber Price Indices](#). I am pleased to confirm the continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics, subject to your team addressing the areas highlighted below.

The Timber Price Indices provide important information on the state of the UK timber industry. Our review found many positive aspects that demonstrate the quality and value of the statistics. For instance:

- You see user engagement as an ongoing activity and opportunity to improve statistics across all Forest Research outputs, including Timber Price Indices. You are transparent about user engagement activities: the Forest Research website has a [separate page](#) on user engagement which lists uses of the statistics and contains the results, recommendations and implementation plans from in-depth user engagement surveys (which are carried out every two years across all outputs).
- The bulletin is well-structured and flows well, with key findings and key information at the front. Definitions are clear and the glossary is helpful for lay readers. In general, the tables and charts within the release are informative and well-presented, allowing users to quickly understand the latest trends. Some figures allow for comparison over five-, 10- and 20-year periods, which is useful for understanding both short- and long-term price changes.
- The data source is suitable, and the methods are sound. The data are consistent, and revisions and potential bias are flagged and explained clearly. Background information and supporting quality documents are published alongside the statistics to assist users in fully understanding the data; for example, a [methodology paper](#) describes the 2008 methodology change.
- “The quality assurance process for these statistics is rigorous and well-established. Regular QA involves Harvesting & Marketing Officers in England (Forestry England) and Scotland (Forestry & Land Scotland). Methodology reviews and changes are discussed with the [Expert Group on Timber and Trade Statistics](#), which includes people from across UK Government, Devolved Governments and the timber industry.

Our review also identified several ways in which we consider that you could further enhance the trustworthiness and quality of these statistics, including:

- Reviewing the pre-release access list. We recognise the long list and welcome your efforts to challenge people on inclusion, but the list should be rationalised significantly to enhance public trust and confidence in the statistics.
- The data used to produce these statistics are obtained from administrative records of timber sales by the Forestry Commission and Natural Resources Wales, as detailed in the quality report. However, there is a lack of information published on the quality assurance of these administrative data. We encourage you to apply our [Quality Assurance of Administrative Data](#) (QAAD) framework and communicate findings from your review to users to maintain user confidence in the quality of the data.
- You might also like to use the QAAD review as an opportunity to review the quality assurance arrangements for all forestry administrative data sources.
- We recommend that you review supporting documents such as the methodology review, which is dated August 2008. We consider that it would be helpful to add a note that the information in the document is still relevant to users, for example by including a last reviewed date.

Our Agriculture, Energy and Environment Domain Lead, Job de Roij, will continue to engage with your team on progress in the coming months. Please let me know if there is any aspect of this letter that you wish to discuss.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont  
Assessment Programme Lead